

Howland Wood - Curatorial

Stearns, Foster W.
[Boston, MA]

1917-1934



STATE LIBRARY OF MASSACHUSETTS
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON

15 August, 1917.

Mr. Howland Wood,
Curator, American Numismatic Society,
Broadway & 156th Street,
New York City.

Dear Mr. Wood:-

Some time ago I wrote to the Curator of Numismatics in the Archaeological Museum in Madrid asking for the name of any numismatic dealer in Spain, and in reply I got more than I bargained for. He turned the letter over to another gentleman who sent me a long letter with rubbings of 146 coins which must have cost him a good deal of trouble.

I have had very little time of late for numismatics and am not ~~now~~ in a position to make a start on a Spanish collection, but it occurred to me that the Society or some of its members might be interested to see this material, and rather than send it back to Sr. Vives I am sending it to you herewith. If it interests you at all perhaps you will assume the responsibility for it, if not return it to me.

With best wishes, believe me,

Yours very truly,

Foster W. Stearns

State Librarian.

August 22nd, 1917.

Mr. Foster W. Stearns, State Librarian,
State Library,
Boston, Massachusetts.

Dear Sir:-

Your favor enclosing letter and rubbings from Sr. Dives has been received. I delayed acknowledging these as I wanted to show the letter to our President who is much interested in the Greek and Roman coinage for Spain. He has taken over this letter, and says he will order some of the pieces from Sr. Dives, therefore you need not feel any more responsibility towards the gentleman. I thank you very much for sending it on, and trust you are adding to your collection as you see fit.

Very truly yours,

Curator.

AMERICAN LEGATION
OFFICE OF THE MILITARY ATTACHE
~~BRUSSELS~~

Antwerp
8 May, 1919.

My dear Wood, -

The other day
I called at the Cabinet des
Medailles in Brussels.

M. Tournent, the conservateur,
was out; but I have since had
a note from him in his
capacity as Secretary of the
Société Royale de Numisma-
tique.

They have at a recent meet-
- the first since the war - ex-
- purged from their records all
corresponding members from
every country; and now they

want new corresponding members
from allied countries to take
their place.

I suggested that he write to
you, as I think most of the
American collectors who would
care to spend fifteen francs
in this way are already con-
nected with your society.

Imagine that you have some
members who will be interested
in this way of helping the
Belgian society - get on its feet.

I was recently in Amsterdam,
where I visited Schulmann, and
saw his full line of war-items.

Very sincerely yours

Foster Jeans

Lieut. Foster Jeans

A.P.O. 944, American E.F.

140 Tremont Street
Boston

3 October, 1919.

Dear Mr. Wood, -

You asked me to pick up any local coinage that I could in France and Belgium for the A.N.S. Unfortunately, I was ordered home before I could do much in this line - I hoped to do more for myself.

I did however, get the set of Ghent pieces which I am enclosing, and which I shall be glad to present to

the Society if it does not already possess them.

The pieces are dated, and I know of no special "story" attached to them, except to say that the earlier type of the 5 franc is rapidly becoming scarce, the issue having been limited.

Have you seen the "Liste des Monnaies de nécessité frappées ou imprimées par les diverses villes de France ou des Colonies" issued by L. Ciani, 54, rue Taitbout, Paris (1^{re})? It contains 100 items in metal, as well as some prison camp pieces, and various cardboard issues. Had I returned via Paris, I should have gone there

and made a few purchases for the Society; but I
sailed direct from Antwerp.

Yours very sincerely
H. A. Stearns.

UNITED STATES HIGH COMMISSION

American Embassy
Constantinople

June 5, 1922.

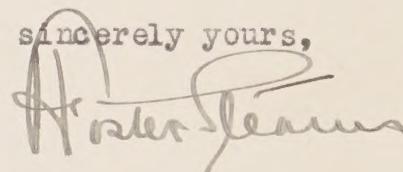
Howland Wood, Esquire, Curator,
American Numismatic Society,
Broadway & 156th St.,
New York.

Dear Mr. Wood:

I have just had my attention called to a large and important collection of Moslem coins in all three metals to the number of about 700. I do not know enough about the subject to give a more detailed description, but I am writing you in case you might know of anyone who would be interested in this, and the owner will be glad to send a typewritten catalogue and photographs if desired.

With best wishes,

Very sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Arthur Hays Sulzberger", written in a cursive style.

June 30th, 1922.

Foster Stearns, Esq.
U.S. High Commission
American Embassy
Constantinople

Dear Mr. Stearns:

In reply to your letter of June 5th, we think that the collection about which you write has been brought to our attention two or three times in the past six or seven months. However, if it will cause no trouble, we should be glad to see the photographs and typewritten catalogue as we could then tell whether or not we would be interested in such a collection.

Very sincerely yours,

Curator

ms/n

22 Brimmer Street,
Boston, Mass.
September 16, 1924

Mr. Howland Wood,
American Numismatic Society,
Broadway at 156th Street,
New York.

Dear Mr. Wood,-

After my wanderings in the Near East, I am once more in Boston to stay for a while, at least. (By the way, will you please see that the above address is placed on the Society's mailing list?)

Out in Constantinople our one amusement was poking about in the bazaars; and in view of my interest in numismatics, I naturally made a point of picking up what came in my way along those lines. I found Byzantine coins scarce and unreliable, but I got a few. My chief line however, was Russian decorations, badges and medals, of which I gathered in several hundred. With these of course, there was always the feeling that any money that went into them helped some unfortunate refugee.

Now that I am at home again, however, I find that it is difficult to find any way of displaying them in a private house, and I hate to keep the money tied up in things which are locked up and only gotten out at rare intervals. I have decided, therefore to try to dispose of them; but before doing so I should like to know whether you would care to see them:

a) with a view to selecting anything of interest for the Society's collection, which I should be glad to present to it - I assume that most of the lot you would already have;

b) with a view to a loan exhibition, in case you saw material for anything of the sort.

If you would be interested, I can box them up sometime before long and send them over to you, for inspection.

A good part of the collection consists of regimental and other badges such as the Russians were wont to wear plentifully besprinkled over the fronts of their coats; and perhaps you will say that these are jewelry rather than numismatics. But there are also the stars and insignia of the four common Russian orders in all classes, together with some others, such as the Order of the White Eagle; and a miscellaneous lot of campaign and occasional medals.

I shall be glad to know if this sounds at all interesting to you.

With best wishes, believe me,
Very sincerely yours,

Walter S. ...

September 18th, 1924

Mr. Foster Stearns
22 Brimmer Street
Boston, Mass.

Dear Mr. Stearns:

Your letter was certainly most welcome, and I trust that we shall see you here before the winter is over.

I am very much interested in what you say about your Russian decorations, and we should be very glad to see them. I am naturally sorry that you want to dispose of them, but I well appreciate how cumbersome a collection of these might be in a private house. As you are so generous as to offer us some of them, we should be very glad to accept any that we desire. I feel sure that we should be happy to have a number of them, for our Russian decorations are not very strong. I should judge that we should not want regimental badges or insignia, however, because if we go into this phase, we should certainly be swamped in a few years. We could not undertake to exhibit them for many months as we are now preparing an exhibition of modern foreign medals.

I think that Elder could sell these as well as anyone, as he has had fair success in selling decorations in his sales. Therefore, if agreeable to you, I should be glad to have you send on the lot and we could then look them over.

With appreciation of your thought of us, I am,

Very truly yours,

Curator

25 September, 1924.

Mr. Howland Wood,
American Numismatic Society,
New York.

Dear Mr. Wood:

Thank ^{you} for your letter, and promise of assistance in the sale of my Russian wares. I am sending them today, by express from R.H. Stearns Co., addressed to the Society.

You will find that my book-keeping and cataloguing is most inadequate. I bought them over a period of two years, and kept no record of what I paid for them; in most cases I was supposed to be getting them for the value of the metal, or only a slight advance, and as all shoppers in Constantinople kept track of the market rate on old silver, and I saw some of these weighed, I believed that I had some check on prices.

As to cataloguing, I have included with each of the decorations, you will find, a slip telling my idea of what it is. These are not to be taken as authoritative, and where you have any different information on any of them, you are probably right. As for the badges, I have made no attempt to label them, as they range from Imperial Dragoon Guards to Anti-Vodka Societies, and in most cases I do not myself know what they are. In fact, I found no Russian who could identify more than the few of them which happened to be known to him personally. If I had made a business of making each of my friends identify all he could, I might have got a fairly good line on them in time; but I never did.

When you have looked them over and decided what interests you, I should be glad to have a list of these. I don't quite know how many this will prove to be. I want make the Society a gift, all right, and have no hope of getting all my money back or anything like that; but I should like to realize something appreciable on them, for my Numismatic Fund. I am a little afraid that the badges will be hard to sell because of the difficulty in describing the pieces in a catalogue. Perhaps you can give me some further light on this when you have seen them.

I should have said that according to my records, there are in the lot 96 decorations and medals, mostly Russian but some of other countries; and 194 badges -- all this "more or less".

I shall expect, then, to hear from you when you have looked them over at your leisure, but before you send them to Elder.

Yes, I shall hope to come in to see you one of these days.

Very sincerely yours,

R. H. Stearns

September 27th, 1924

Foster Stearns, Esq.
22 Brimmer Street
Boston, Mass.

Dear Mr. Stearns:

The box of Russian decorations has just come to hand. I have laid the pieces out and they certainly make a grand showing. I shall be happy to let you know a little later what the Society would gladly accept from such a collection.

The badges appeal to me strongly, but I really think that they are not in our line - however, I will not yet commit myself! They make such a wonderful group that I should say they ought to be sold as a whole, if possible. Maybe I could interest someone ~~here~~ with whom I am in touch, and therefore I should be glad if you could give me some idea as to what you feel you should be able to get for the regimental and miscellaneous badges.

Could you tell me what the small badges with chains are for?

In the meantime, I am going to have a lot of fun looking these over.

Greatly appreciating your kind offer and thanking you very much for allowing us to see this collection, I am,

Very truly yours,

Curator

29 September, 1924.

Dear Wood, Glad you like
the Russian things -
only don't be too en-
thusiastic, or I shall
be changing my mind
and deciding to keep
them! - I am feeling
a little "lonesome" already.

It certainly would reassure
me to parting with them
if they were to be kept
together - and especially
if they went into the
Society's collection.

As I wrote you, my lack of

records, and the constant fluctuations in exchange during the period when I was buying, make it difficult to be sure what I paid for them; but on any basis of estimate that I can evolve, I should say that I must have spent in the neighborhood of \$400. on the badges alone.

Now as to what I can reasonably expect to get for them, you are a better judge of the market than I.

I am going to Washington at the end of the week for the dedication of our First Division monument; and I think I will stop in New York Monday (Oct. 6),

and run up and see you. It is so much easier to talk than to write.

As for the small badges with chains, I do not recall having seen one now. The screw type were screwed right through the coat, on the left breast; whether the chain type were pinned on, ~~or not~~ at the same place, or whether they were now at the neck - at the opening of a military collar - I really don't know. They include some of the smartest regiments, I believe - you have probably noticed the curious one representing the front of a Hussar's coat, in blue enamel.

Looking forward to seeing you soon, sincerely yours
Foster Warren

22 Brimmer St.
Boston

November 2, 1924.

Dear Mr. Wood,

I am glad to know that the Council and the Committee on Decorations are pleased with the Russian decorations.

There were a couple of questions that I meant to ask you when I saw you and forgot about.

1. I have a coin-cabinet with shallow trays made by the Trindale Cabinet Co. This calls for boxes for the individual coins and I have exhausted my supply. The ones I have I got from the Museum of Fine Arts while I was there, and now they no longer use them.

and I can't find any one in Boston
who stocks them. Can you tell
me where to get them? Perhaps
if they are available in N.Y.
you would be good enough to
call up the dealer and ask
him to send me particulars.
I shall want several hundred.

2. What is justifiable in the
way of cleaning coins beyond
soap & water? I quite realize
that it is a sign of a tyro
to expect one's pieces to shine;
but sometimes one runs across
a piece in good general condition
except for a bad stain, where it
seems as if judicious use of
a little weak acid would do
a lot of good. Do you use any,
and if so, what? Once in a
while, too, one finds a piece that

has been shelled.

I am afraid I shan't be in N.Y. for the meeting
the 8th, but shall be passing through a little
later in the month, and shall hope to stop in
and see all of you.

Sincerely yours

Foster Dean

November 11th, 1924

Foster Stearns, Esq.
22 Brimmer Street
Boston, Mass.

Dear Mr. Stearns:

There is no one in New York who carries any stock of coin boxes; and no manufacturer, of whom I know, will bother with any order of much under five thousand. If I remember correctly, the Denison Manufacturing Company made the boxes for the Massachusetts Historical Society. Possibly, they would make you a small lot, or some small fancy box manufacturer in Boston. The New York fellows are so independent and will do nothing on a small scale.

With regard to cleaning coins - we do not rather than we do! However, some household ammonia in hot water will work wonders in taking out dirt, some stains and some tarnish. If you make a not too strong solution, it will not make the coins too shiney. You can do the same to a slight degree with copper coins.

You can remove shellac with either alcohol or gasoline, or turpentine. I never can remember whether the alcohol takes off shellac or varnish.

Excuse the delay in replying to your letter, but my time has been more than fully occupied in the preparations for the coming Foreign Medals Exhibition which opens on Thursday next.

Very truly yours,

Curator

January 7, 1926.

Dear Mr. Wood

Thank you for your
letter of December 22^d, and forgive my
delay in replying!

As to the nature of the Russian weights;
I should have made a great many more
notes than I did of the things that were
told me about my purchases in Cpsle.
In this case it is my recollection that I
was told simply that they were official
standards for the weighing of coins. I
know, as you say, that the inscriptions
indicate weights, rather than coin-values;
and whether each of these pieces corresponded
exactly with the weight of some specific
coin, or not, I don't know. It would be in
this way that they would be used by the
Russian bank in Mongolia or Manchuria,
not for circulation; but I have no reason
to think that they were confined to Asiatic
Russia.

I take it you have not found anyone in-
terested in my Russian badges. I have now
accepted a job as Librarian and Curator of
the Museum at Holy Cross College; and

when our new building is finished
I may have a chance to put them on
exhibition there - or some of them. For the
present I will leave them with
you, unless they are in your way.

Sorry I cannot come over for the meeting
Saturday. I really mean to, one of these days.

With all good wishes for the New Year,

I am cordially yours

Foster Stearns

February 3rd, 1926

Foster Stearns, Esq.
22 Brimmer Street
Boston, Mass.

Dear Mr. Stearns:

The Russian badges - to use a mercantile term -
have been "slow sellers". They are not in the way
here, so they can stay just as long as you may wish
to have them remain.

Very truly yours,

Curator



2.
EDEN HOTEL, ROME

19, Via Ludovica

Telegrams: EDENHOTEL ROME

February 14, 1932

Dear Mr. Noe, - This is to report that I
found Prof. Mistruzzi, and have had two
delightful visits with him. He is
a charming person, and well worth any
of our members' looking up when
in Rome. I have bought several of
his medals - the Virgil + the
Mussolini which you have, among
them. I enclose his card, giving his
present address.

He asked my opinion about the
feasibility of his making a trip to
the United States to make portrait
medallions - of course I said not
now; whether it would ever pay,
I can't judge. If done under good
auspices, it might - if he just

drifted in, it probably won't.

I should like to see the Vatican collection, but Comm. Serafini, whose principal job now is as governor of the Vatican State, has not been well lately, and so far I have not succeeded.

The only other numismatic item of interest I have to report is this:

When the coins of the Irish Free State were to be issued, the subjects, motifs, and designs were invited from four artists - mean Italian. Of the Italian's designs, four proof sets were struck, of which one is in the U.S.A., and Santamaria has the other three for sale - price, 300 lire the set.

The above, of course, is Santamaria's story. I have verified it, but have seen the proofs, which are interesting work.

I think it not impossible that

the one set referred to may be
reposing in your vaults if not,
Mr. Wood may be interested to
know of this.

I expect to land in New York
early in April, and will run up
to see you, if I am not in too
much of a hurry to get to Boston.

TELEPHONE
HANCOCK 65

GEMINI

HANCOCK

NEW HAMPSHIRE

September 28, 1932

Dear Mr. Noe

On looking over the bids
given in your letter of yesterday, I
find they are somewhat higher
than the very rough guess I had
made.

I think I will let Lots 108, 109,
110 go, and try for the Malta
pieces and the Alexander VIII Quadri-
ple. If the Malta pieces do not
come to me at the figures you
name, we might raise the ante a trifle
on the Quadriple.

To be sure of our understanding,
I repeat your figures:

Lot 84	—	\$6.00 each
85	—	8.00 "
86	—	15.00
87	—	25.00
88	—	15.00
113	—	30.00

A check for deposit is for total purchase by
return mail whenever you say the word.

Sincerely yours
R. Porter Stearns

GEMINI

HANCOCK

NEW HAMPSHIRE

12 - X - 32.

Dear Mr. Wood, I was much interested to receive your parcel, with enclosed letter, and to know that things went at the sale. I am glad to have the four lots, and am enclosing check for \$68.36, to cover the cost, plus postage.

I should like to have had the quadrupla - lot 113 - but I suppose there is every likelihood that when bidding on it went as high as that, it would have gone even higher if we had stayed in. Anyway \$68. is enough, for times like these; but I am glad to have the Morosini sale represented in my collection.

With regard to the three pieces in lot 85, I do not care to sell one. I had intended, however, to offer one of them to the Society as a gift, in case I got them and you wanted one. Since you evidently could use it, I am enclosing it, and trust you will accept it on these terms.

With best thanks for your assistance,

Very sincerely yours

Walter Stearns

Enclosures:

1 ducat.

Makta - Wigo de Fonteno Verdala.

October 11, 1932.

Mr. Foster Stearns
Gemini
Hancock, New Hampshire!

Dear Mr. Stearns:

At the Morosini sale I bought four lots for you. Lot 84 I thought the bid was mine but found it was the other fellow's bid. These sold for \$17.50 but I asked the man afterwards about them and he was willing to pay up to \$25.00 for them so you would have lost them anyway. I unfortunately left my catalogue at home but Lot 113 went for over \$80.00. The coins purchased are as follows:

Lot 85	\$13.00
" 86	15.00
" 87	24.00
" 88	<u>16.00</u>
	\$68.00

As I had to pay for these personally please make out the check to me. If you do not want all three of No. 85 we would be glad to buy one of them from you. In sending check please add whatever postage there is on the envelope.

Very truly yours,

Hut:JG

Curator

October 14, 1932.

Mr. Foster Stearns
Gemini
Hancock, New Hampshire.

Dear Mr. Stearns:

Your favor enclosing check for \$68.86 at hand. Many thanks for the same. More thanks, however, for the treat of Verdala. When I wrote you I was expecting to pay for it, but this being a museum gift is always most acceptable.

As for the quadruple, I have not doubt in the world that it would have gone higher than that it sold for if I had continued bidding because I had learned it is really worth more than that it sold for. Again thanking you, I remain

Very truly yours,

HW:JG

Curator

TELEPHONE
HANCOCK 65

GEMINI

HANCOCK

NEW HAMPSHIRE

1 August, 1933

Dear Mr. Wood, Can you tell me what experience any of our members have had with Beistle's Unique Coin Holders?

I got one sample holder some years ago, but was not quite convinced, apparently, at the time, as I got no more.

If it has no serious defects, it certainly renders the coins portable and easily visible, and without handling.

I shall be grateful for any advice you can give me on this, or any other method of coin storage.

Sincerely yours

Foster Stearns

August 3, 1933.

Mr. Foster Stearns
Gemini
Hanchek, New Hampshire.

Dear Mr. Stearns:

Although I have not myself used Beistle's coin holders they seem to be growing in popular favor, as each year more show their coins by this method at the club. He has perfected them in recent years and also has gotten other forms. Those that come in book form held together by rings I think are the monopoly of the Scott Stamp and Coin Company and Wayte Raymond. Beistle sells the other forms although he makes them all. If you want to get the opinion of one who has used them regularly and constantly for several years write to F. C. C. Boyd, 237 East 20th Street, New York City.

Very truly yours,

HW:JG

Curator

FOSTER STEARNS
HANCOCK
NEW HAMPSHIRE

August 20, 1934.

Mr. Howland Wood, Curator,
American Numismatic Society,
Broadway at 156th Street,
New York, N. Y.

Dear Howland Wood:

A few months ago I had some correspondence with Mr. Waldo Newcomer of Baltimore about his coins of the Knights of St. John in Rhodes and Malta. Recently I have seen the news of his death.

I wonder if you can tell me whether his collection is likely to be disposed of at auction? He wanted to sell the Malta (and Rhodes) coins as a lot, which was quite beyond me, especially in view of the large amount of gold. But if I could get at just the things I want ~~—~~ especially the silver of Rhodes — I should undergo severe temptation, at least!

If the information is not yet available, I should be grateful if you would keep in mind my interest in this, and let me know whenever anything transpires.

Sincerely yours,

Foster Stearns

August 22, 1934.

Mr. Foster Stearns
Hancock, N. H.

Dear Mr. Stearns:

Newcomer's death apparently was quite sudden. I have heard nothing at all as to the disposal of his collection. I know he had been selling it out piecemeal for sometime. The three dealers as far as I know most in touch with this are Wayte Raymond, Johnson of the St. Louis Stamp and Coin Company and B. Max Mehl. If I were you I would keep in touch with all three of these.

Very truly yours,

HW:JG

Curator